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## RESIST NOT EVIL.

ROBERT K. RICHARDSON.

**A**SIDE from theories which emphasize the beneficence of war regardless of Christian standards, there are possible two rational opinions about war either one of which may properly lay claim to Christian character: the one that war is unpermissible and unchristian under all circumstances; the other that war may be a last resort, a regrettable resort, but sometimes the one morally defensible resort. The former view finds obvious support in the precept of Jesus. Its chief modern supporter is, of course, the late Count Tolstoi. Saint Augustine in late antiquity and Norman Angell at the present day may be deemed representative of the second doctrine. This paper is a comparative study of these four teachers from the standpoint of their respective epochs and environments. It closes with some conclusions suggested by the results of this study.

*Jesus.*

The best authenticated sayings of Jesus are presumably those found by critics in the reconstructed non-Markan source used by Matthew and Luke, usually designated "Q." About these sayings in "Q" is the minimum of the encrustation of tradition. In them the historical and human Jesus stands revealed much as the pre-Bonaventuran Francis of Assisi, thanks to Sabatier, stands revealed in the earlier chronicles and documents of the Franciscan Order. Nothing in these most certain of Jesus' Logia gives apparent warrant for war. Rather we find such sayings as: "Whoever smites thee on thy (right) cheek, turn to him also the other," or: "I say to you, love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you." In close accord with these "Q" sayings and presumably quite genuine is the commandment found in Matthew, omitted in Vol. XXVII.—No. 2.

Luke, used by Tolstoi, and in a sense generalizing the matter: "Resist not evil."

Little in the speeches or life of our Lord seemingly entitles us to wrest from their literal meaning, as applied by Jesus to the men and circumstances with which He was immediately connected, the words: "Resist not evil." His recorded life is by no means lacking in out-spoken and justifiable vituperation, but, aside from the easily over-estimated violence of the expulsion of the money-changers, it contains nothing that even savours of actual force. The Master frequently speaks in paradoxes; constantly we must beware the turn of humour or make allowance for the stroke of irony. In this instance a plain, *prima facie* interpretation of the words of the Christ appears necessitated by their entire and evident harmony with His whole intellectual habit and the general character of His active career, in life and in death. The literal interpretation precisely is most consonant with Jesus' attitude toward the material goods of life, with His beliefs as to the World to Come and with His oriental and Galilean surroundings.

Such an interpretation accords with Jesus' attitude with respect to the material goods of life,—one pretty much that of the genial and cheerful asceticism of His devoted, successful and similarly emotionally endowed imitator, Saint Francis. Neither of these two shunned such goods: neither sought them. The life of wandering that He himself led, Jesus recommended only to such as were to be active in propaganda: Saint Francis exhibited similar lenity toward the average laity by providing for them the less rigorous Tertiary Order. Brother Sun and Sister Water were the song of the friar; and the Great Teacher's eye, as He discoursed, sought the fields white for harvest and rested on the vesture of the lilies. Either, on occasion, consorted with the leper or feasted with the rich. Neither was greatly concerned, we may presume, with sculptured stone or frescoed plaster. Both are alike in the little heed they pay to the economic problems of existence. The form of the Lord's Prayer in "Q" is simply: "Father, give us this day

our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, even as we have forgiven our debtors, and lead us not into temptation." An attitude so free and easy as this toward life's bodily needs and enjoyments leaves little indeed to serve as object of combat. Those who have little to lose—that is, little they esteem of genuine importance—have slender motive forcibly to retain that little.

The literal interpretation, again, agrees with the Master's expectations as to the World to Come; agrees, that is, with His own Messianic interpretation of His mission. How far the Kingdom for which Jesus toiled was in His mind eschatological and how far temporal and social, is still vastly disputed by the theologians: presumably His conception shared both characteristics. The significance for the Great Physician of the social and temporal certainly must not be minimized. On the other hand, the characteristics of surviving apocalyptic literature and the frequency of quotation therefrom in the New Testament at large, together with the fact of Jesus' assumption of Messianic powers and His prophecies of last things—such as the prophecy of the judging of the Twelve Tribes of Israel by the apostles seated on twelve thrones, assigned to "Q"—lead to the conviction that His intellectual life moved largely, if freely, in the thought drifts of His age and people. The more than Isaiah-like, the thoroughly unique, spirituality of Jesus' interpretation of the Messianic hope and His indubitable expectation of the proximate approach of the world's supreme catastrophe make it difficult to understand how He could have been the advocate of a warfare so likely to distract attention from the great and ultimate event immediately at hand.

In more than one respect "Q" points to the thoroughly Galilean character of Jesus, and with such a Galilean type the simple and *prima facie* interpretation of the famous saying accords exactly. The Man of Galilee had been a Galilean boy, and many must have been the mental patterns stamped upon that subtle and receptive brain by the recurring sights and sounds of eastern village life. The sayings of the Master may well reflect ideas still existent

in the communities of the East, and, among them, those concerned with the nature of justice and the desirability or undesirability of exacting punishment and retribution. These ideas are, it chances, rather antithetic to those of the Occident, of the Roman or the Anglo-Saxon. They are connected with an administration of justice almost entirely local, the government intervening only under the most extraordinary circumstances. In this oriental village justice less attention than with us is paid to the category of the offense in and of itself and much more to concomitant circumstances, to the probable effect of punishment on the culprit and to the hesitations, sympathies and good-nature of the plaintiff. To this day, writes Mr. Innes in the *Hibbert Journal*, in an article concerned with English legal administration in Egypt, "one of the primary duties of the kadi is not to judge but to reconcile; and before passing sentence, he is enjoined by the Koran to use his influence with the prosecutor or the plaintiff to forgive, or, at least, to abate the rigour of his full demand." In the mind of the East, "the man, who, though having just cause for anger, yet refuses to punish and forgives time after time, that is the man who is most respected. One has to realize this point of view to understand the exhortation: 'Not until seven times; but until seventy times seven.' . . . What we call justice is to the devout Mohammedan, wickedness, repugnant to his most sacred feelings."

"Resist not evil," then, is clearly a saying of the East. Equivalent expressions are met with in the Koran, a book substantially uninfluenced by Christianity, as for example in the verse quoted by Innes: "Whosoever shall remit punishment, it shall be accepted as an atonement for him." The precept of Jesus, though referring clearly enough to private transactions, is in spirit contrary to violence of any type. It is the emotional, virtually the instinctive, voice of the religious Orient.<sup>1</sup> It is spoken by the Christ in the literal sense.

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<sup>1</sup> On Jesus as child of the East, see also articles by A. M. Rihbany, entitled "The Syrian Christ" and "The Oriental Manner of Speech," in *The Atlantic Monthly*, 1916, vol. CXVII, pp. 309 *et seq.*, 506 *et seq.*

*Tolstoi.*

It has been remarked that the most important fact of the Crimean War is that Count Leo Tolstoi escaped being killed. It is difficult to say whether the dictum were best maintained on the basis of Tolstoi's achievement in pure *belles lettres* or on the ground that he has been conspicuously the most successful literal imitator of Jesus in modern times. His influence has not improbably made war more hateful than the influence of any other single man in either hemisphere. He is an easily traceable leaven in American politics at the present moment. His attitude is one of absolute non-resistance, whether in private affairs by resort to the courts or in international concerns by recourse to armies. For Tolstoi the supreme commandment of Jesus is: "Resist not evil."

Nor is there anything of strangeness in the sympathy of the Russian for the Galilean. The autonomy of the Mir is not without analogy to that of the village community of the Orient. From the days of the Vikings and of the Altaian nomads who first preyed upon the Russian lands to the partition of Poland by Frederick the Great and the Empress Catherine, the political ruination of the Slav has been an accentuated localism of the most placid and non-resisting type. Russian economic life, also, is but beginning to lose a simplicity akin to that of ancient Palestine's. Tolstoi's thought thus moves mainly within the confines of that agriculture which monopolized Russian endeavor till the epoch of Count Witte's industrialism. The æsthetic bent, likewise, of Count Tolstoi is akin to that of Jesus: it is toward the beauty of nature relatively without regard to art. "The first condition," he writes, "essentially necessary to happiness has ever been admitted by all men to be a life in which the link between him and nature is not destroyed—that is a life in the open air, in the sunshine, in communion with nature, plants and animals." Intellectually Tolstoi is indefinitely more sophisticated, more consciously eclectic and systematic, than Jesus: far, indeed, is he removed from the Messianism of "Q." Yet, *in practical*

*effect*, the Messianic ideas of the Christ find their analogue in Tolstoi's conception of the "Son of Man." As Tolstoi deems this conception "the basis of the whole Gospel," and as he makes it almost the entire rational substructure of his non-resistance superstructure, it requires further attention.

Tolstoi's doctrine of the "Son of Man" holds that man has a birth from above and from below: a birth spiritual and a birth natural. The spiritual life which comes to him from above transcends the natural and individual life. It is itself not individual life, but is God in the individual life. The name given to this life of God in man is "the Son of Man." Tolstoi goes so far, even, as to identify the mystical "Son of Man" with the Logos of Stoicism, proving his point from Epictetus and the Emperor Marcus. The religious consciousness of the farther East, of India and China, is made to render further support to his idea. All men possess this "Son of Man," though some serve it and some heed it not. Immortality is neither more nor less than the longed-for merging of the individual life with the God within us. Immortality as personal is non-existent. Tolstoi makes the remarkable claim, in fact, that not in a single passage of the Gospel, "does Christ speak of His own personal resurrection." "The whole purport of Christ's doctrine is to teach His disciples that individual life being but a delusion, they should renounce it, and transfer their individual lives into the life of all humanity, into the life of the 'Son of Man.'"

Such is the mystical doctrine that forms the rational basis for Tolstoian non-resistance: and so, replying to the criticism that if the innocent man always yield to force he will never succeed in getting anything to show for his yielding, Tolstoi explains that the innocent lose nothing in submitting to violence precisely because they have nothing to lose. "It is just in the conviction," he declares, "that this earthly individual life is something real, and actually belongs to us, that the misunderstanding lies which prevents our comprehending the doctrine of Christ. Christ knows

the illusion by which men know their own individual lives as something real, and something to which they have a personal right: and He shows them, in a series of sermons and parables, that they have no claims on life, that they have, indeed, no life at all, until they attain true life, by renouncing the shadow which they call their life." The Russian clearly stands in the succession of Eckhart and the author of the German Theology. It is clear that the basis of his theory of non-resistance is so mystical, almost, one is tempted to say, so gnostic and dualistic, as—on any grounds presented by Tolstoi himself—to be quite unacceptable to any one according real value to the achievements of civilized society.

### *Jesus and Tolstoi.*

The voice of Jesus was, in the nature of things, addressed to an age and a community ignorant or little regardful of three capital facts in contemporary or subsequent experience: the State, the Renaissance, the Experience of Nations in History. Tolstoi is cognizant, but disdainful or careless, of these matters.

(1) *The State.* The every-day experience of the Master was the rural experience of His time. Of the governmental problems of the Roman state, of the duties of that far-off thing intervening so strangely in the local life from time to time, like a *Deus in machina*, of its right to exist, He says next to nothing. There is slight evidence but that He cared next to nothing. Yet to ourselves, if not to tsar-pestered Tolstoi, the state is one of the most basic, most strife-saving achievements of mankind: an entity not to be injured without harm to those in whose loyalty it finds existence and to whom it returns protection and assistance in spheres manifold. It is the instrument, rightly used, of the attainment of collective personality and collective service.

(2) *The Renaissance.* The modern world is the child of the non-Semitic, non-quietistic West and of the Renaissance. Equally removed from eschatological Messianism



and from personality-denying and world-renouncing mysticism, it recognises the worth of the heritage of classical antiquity and the value—the God-given value, it would say—of the material, intellectual and institutional accretions of the centuries. Whatever heaven may remain, western man has decided that earth also is his home. He is told by his astronomers that his globe is likely to swing about its sun, warm, beautiful and inhabitable, for millions of years to come. The catastrophic and the mystical alike, the latter to an excessive degree, have retreated to the very “periphery of consciousness,” and the world, a good world, a permanent world, a real world, an improvable world, to be lived for and died for, a capital not to be pillaged nor to be left to pillage, fills the social mind with its rounding bulk.

(3) *The Experience of the Nations in History.* The damage done to flourishing peoples by hostile and aggressive neighbors is to us too patent to be ignored, as well as are the generally evil consequences of failure to secure as close approximation as possible of the boundaries of state and nationality. The partition of a highly pacifistic and at the moment politically liberal Poland is doubly a case in point. For the Dutch to have adopted a pacifistic attitude of the Tolstoian type in the days of Philip II would apparently have been to the permanent detriment of the generations subsequent, and the distaste for bloodshed evinced by Louis XVI on the tenth of August was prelude to the worst of the most bungled and most sentimental revolution the world has ever seen. The experience of the nations in history indicates the importance of the conservation at every hazard of the gains of state and national life and the danger of leaving to their own devices the devotees of violence—always supposing that the goods represented by the state, by the spirit of the Renaissance and by the consciousness of nationality, be held inherently real and valuable. Of this experience the ancient Teacher is unaware and the modern teacher neglectful.

The thoughtful Christian of the modern west may not

disregard these factors nor their meaning for group and individual life. Like Tolstoi, though with more seeing eye, or like Saint Francis, he must deliberately set them behind his back and, in a highly altered environment, follow literally the injunction of Jesus, or, somewhat in the spirit of the Alexandrian fathers or of the judicious Hooker, discover God's hand in the developments of history and the gifts of constructive reason, and equally truly seek to follow the Master by attempting to winnow the universal, the eternal and the substantial in Jesus' saying, not from the erroneous, but from the local, the temporary and the accidental. Of those who have chosen the second alternative Norman Angell in the modern world and Saint Augustine (however little he realized it) in the ancient may fairly be considered representative.

*Saint Augustine.*

In Jesus' summary of the law which found acceptance with the scribe, the "Resist not evil" of the countryside became the all-embracing and more truly generalizing enunciation of the commandment of love of God and of one's neighbor. This generalization, already accepted by the Jewish mind, became in turn, in the Alexandrian gospel of John, the superbly mystical and basic conception of the "peace" of him in whom abide the Father and the Word. The tendencies of Alexandria in turn affected Augustine who became their supreme mediator to the Latin West. Three things need particularly to be noted with respect to Augustine's Alexandrianized and Latinized Christianity: the hearty acceptance of Jesus' doctrine of love, the interpretation of the state and of its mission in the light of this same doctrine, and the failure of the Augustinian system adequately to meet the requirements of modern feeling and experience.

Augustine thoroughly accepts Jesus' doctrine of love. It is fundamental to his system. Love's presence is the essence of heaven, its absence the substance of hell. The very phrase of Jesus is employed: "For our good, about

which philosophers have so keenly contended, is nothing else than to be united to God, and by His intellectual and incorporeal embrace our soul grows great with all virtue and true perfection. We are enjoined to love this good with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength. To this good we ought to be led by those who love us, and to lead those we love. Thus are fulfilled those two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul,' and 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' For that man might be intelligent in his self-love, there was appointed for him an end to which he might refer all his actions, that he might be blessed. . . . And the end set before him is 'to draw nigh unto God.' And so, when one who has this intelligent self-love is commanded to love his neighbor as himself, what else is enjoined than that he shall do all in his power to commend to him the love of God?" It would not, indeed, be far wrong to say that all the volumes of the writings of Saint Augustine are epitomized in the simple, oft-quoted phrase: *Cor nostrum inquietum est donec requiescat in Te*—that is, until our heart is completely filled with love.

Augustine, also, is intimately concerned with the state, the mission of which he interprets entirely in the light of the gospel of love. For him the state is no soulless, non-moral affair: unless in love it conserve justice and assist the City of God, or, as we to-day say, help the growth of Christ's Kingdom, it is no state but rather organized brigandage. Thus for the Roman that state from which the Galilean Jew was practically so aloof, becomes a chief engine in the creation of a society based on the doctrine of the love of God and of one's neighbor.

And lastly, there is no hint in Augustine that because the state is based on love it is forced to virtual suicide by any duty of non-resistance to those who would destroy it. For the righteous state to prolong its own existence is to accomplish its own mission of love to those beneath its

protection. The subject's duty to assist the state in this endeavour may for Augustine transcend even the demands of the ascetic and monastic life—and this is going far, since the bishop of Hippo is nothing if not ascetic and renunciatory. He advises Boniface, the best soldier in Africa, to forego becoming a monk precisely in order that he may serve his country in a military capacity; and when Boniface accepts the easy part of the advice and renounces the renunciation, but neglects the toilsome obligations involved in the hard part, he is stingingly rebuked. "Who would have believed, who feared, with Boniface established in Africa as count of the *domestici* and of Africa . . . that the barbarians would be so daring, would have made such progress, . . . turned so many populous places into desert? . . . If, therefore, bounties have been conferred upon thee, albeit earthly and transitory, by the Roman Empire—seeing that it is itself earthly, not celestial, nor can confer save what is in its power—if, therefore, bounties have been conferred upon thee, return not evil for good." For Augustine the state is to be less peace-enjoying than peace-giving. *Quando autem vincunt qui causa iustiore pugnabant, quis dubitet gratulandam esse et provenisse optabilem pacem?* One may be most at peace when most at war.

Augustine's system is, however, so radically transcendental, its real motivation so other-worldly that, fine gold that it is, it may profitably be alloyed with the baser metal of the secular and of the Renaissance. Such an alloy it is, humble in its earthiness but stiffening in its practicality, which is represented by the thought of which Norman Angell is now the conspicuous spokesman.

### *Norman Angell.*

An author who claims that "in the long run the final sanction of the religious ideal is the well-being of society" and who brands as one of the "most vicious" of all possible traditions the belief that "there is some necessary contradiction between interest and morality, that high

ideals must be in conflict with material advantage, that the higher welfare of the race is in some wonderful way founded upon a sacrifice of its material welfare"—both quotations are from *Arms and Industry*—such an author is as far removed from the pessimism of Augustine as from the mysticism of Tolstoi. Angell, then, seeks less to explicate the doctrine of love in and for itself than to secure the acceptance of the doctrine in a sense conformable with a western sense of values by convincing the public opinion of states and nations that it is the only profitable doctrine. His attempt—and in the long run his reputation must be lessened by the very restriction of his aim—is to make the gospel of love appear reasonable, if only on an economic and all too unsentimental a basis.

Angell's writings appear to have a primary and a secondary centre. The relation of each centre to the other he himself would seem not fully to have determined; yet, though adjustments may be needed, his system is consistent as a whole. Its primary centre is the attempted proof of the political, economic and social folly of aggressive war. Most of Angell's pages are devoted to this theme to the eclipse or obscuration of his system's secondary centre.

This secondary centre is the doctrine of the legitimacy of force to prevent the settlement of disputes by force. It finds clear statement in the *Arms and Industry*: ". . . because I do not believe in force, I do believe in defense—that is to say, I do not believe in allowing the other man's force to settle any matter in dispute; and for this reason I have taken the ground that, in performing this function at least—in preventing force being used—the soldier's work is useful." The same spirit runs through *The Great Illusion*. In other words, with Angell as with Augustine, the state is to be utilized in the public as in the private sphere to prevent resort to force: the military power of nations and states is analagous to their police power: the same considerations are to guide in the assurance of peace between nations as prevailed with those who, in Angevin days, in the name of the king's peace, forcibly compelled men in private affairs

to give up self-help and resort to writ and jury. Soldiers are to become policemen and Mars is to be rechristened Ichabod. The general idea is the idea of Augustine, but it is vastly more definite in expression and in its appeal to the experience of the Anglo-Saxon race.

*Summary.*

Two reasonable courses present themselves to the thoughtful Christian facing the admonition of Jesus: "Resist not evil." (1) He may accept the binding obligation of the saying at its literal face value. (2) He may accept the saying as the emotional, almost instinctive expression of a great truth by the most gifted religious mind of the East and of the ages, but as an expression in the nature of the case local, inadequately generalized and needing to be supplemented by a generalization adapted to a longer and wider human experience. This supplement is found in the great commandment of the love of God and of one's neighbor.

To be consistent, a supporter of the first course must minimize or disregard the value of the institutional and material aspects of culture, either as inherently negative or as lacking supposable permanence: there must always exist a natural and logical relationship between the radically pacifistic and the essentially ascetic, even if genially ascetic, frames of mind. He who adopts the second course should, and of course instinctively does, evince respect for the institutional and material adjuncts of culture. On the whole the first solution must be supported, for theological reasons, by those who deem religious truth something fixed and static: Augustine may have been true to the logic of fact but it is hard to see how he was not unconsciously untrue to the logic of literal inspiration. The second standpoint, contrariwise, requires that religious truth, like other truth, be considered as revealed in the great currents of historical thought, action and emotion, in the West as well as in the East. One who accepts the first position has of course no quarrel with the Galilean Christ. One who is

the disciple of the second does to a degree lose touch with the Christ of Galilee that he may lay hold on the Christ of the world, in all its breadth and in all its duration. Conserving his conviction of the moral validity of the use of the state, whether through its police or through its soldiery, for the conservation of mercy and justice, a conviction almost instinctive, not foreign to the Kingdom of God, the product of western evolution, and our Roman and Germanic heritage, such a one may well assert that he is sacrificing the *times*, the *environment*, that were in Christ Jesus, to secure the veritable *mind* that was in Christ Jesus. Either view has its logic, either view its peril—even Mr. Angell distrusts the preparedness required by his own theories—but it behooves clear thinkers and earnest men to guard themselves from the religious doubts and moral paralysis incident to a muddled combination of both standpoints.

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